

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An image forming device management system in which a customer system and a center system are connected by a ~~public-switched telephone~~ network, the customer system including a data communication device connecting a plurality of image forming devices to the ~~telephone~~ network, the center system including a center management device connected to the ~~telephone~~ network, the data communication device comprising:

first message means for transmitting, on a normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, a usage data of a corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the data communication device; and

second message means for transmitting, on an early message date that is earlier than the normal message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices, a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the data communication device, and

the center management device comprising:

first message reception means for receiving, on the normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices that is transmitted by the first message means using the call sent by the data communication device;

second message reception means for receiving, on the early message date for each of the respective image forming devices, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices that is transmitted by the second message means using the call sent by the data communication device; and

remote management means for issuing a billing of a usage charge of the corresponding one of the image forming devices based on the usage data received by either the first message reception means or the second message reception means;

input means for inputting a holiday data of the center system and/or the customer system;

calculation means for calculating an early message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices based on the holiday data, input by the input means, and based on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices; and

early message date setting means for transmitting the early message date, calculated by the calculation means, to the data communication device via the network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the data communication device.

Claims 2-3 (Canceled).

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The image forming device management system according to claim [[2]] 1, wherein the early message date setting means transmits, on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices, the early message date, calculated by the calculation means, to the data communication device via the ~~telephone~~ network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the data communication device.

Claim 5 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 1, wherein the data communication device further comprises message inhibition means

for inhibiting the transmission of the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices by the first message means only on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices, which is subsequent to the early message date when the usage data is transmitted to the center management device by the second message means.

Claim 6 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 1, wherein the normal message date is indicated by a 2-digit day number, and the early message date is indicated by a 4-digit month-and-day number.

Claim 7 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 1, wherein the normal message date is indicated by a 2-digit day number, and the early message date for each of the respective image forming devices is indicated by one of a plurality of 4-digit month-and-day numbers.

Claim 8 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 6, wherein the second message means transmits, by using the call sent by the data communication device, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device when a current month-and-day number matches with a month-and-day number of the early message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices.

Claim 9 (Canceled)

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): An image forming device management system in which a customer system and a center system are connected by a ~~public-switched telephone~~ network, the customer system including a data communication device connecting a plurality of image forming devices to the ~~telephone~~ network, the center system including a center management device connected to the ~~telephone~~ network, the data communication device comprising:

first message means for transmitting, on a normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, a usage data of a corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the center management device; and

second message means for transmitting, on an early message date that is earlier than the normal message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices, a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the center management device, and

the center management device comprising:

first message reception means for receiving, on the normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices that is transmitted by the first message means using the call sent by the center management device;

second message reception means for receiving, on the early message date for each of the respective image forming devices, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices that is transmitted by the second message means using the call sent by the center management device, ~~and~~;

remote management means for issuing a billing of a usage charge of the corresponding one of the image forming devices based on the usage data received by either the first message reception means or the second message reception means;

input means for inputting a holiday data of the center system and/or the customer system;

calculation means for calculating an early message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices based on the holiday data, input by the input means, and based on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices; and

early message date setting means for transmitting the early message date, calculated by the calculation means, to the data communication device via the network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the data communication.

Claim 11 (Canceled).

Claim 12 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 10, wherein the center management device further comprises message inhibition means for inhibiting the reception of the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices by the first message reception means only on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices, which is subsequent to the early message date when the usage data is received by the second message reception means.

Claim 13 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 10, wherein the normal message date is indicated by a 2-digit day number, and the early message date is indicated by a 4-digit month-and-day number.

Claim 14 (Original): The image forming device management system according to claim 10, wherein the normal message date is indicated by a 2-digit day number, and the early message date for each of the respective image forming devices is indicated by one of a plurality of 4-digit month-and-day numbers.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A data communication device for use in an image forming device management system in which a customer system and a center system are connected by a ~~public-switched-telephone~~ network, the customer system including a plurality of image forming devices connected to the ~~telephone~~ network by the data communication device, the center system including a center management device connected to the ~~telephone~~ network, the data communication device comprising:

first message means for transmitting, on a normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, a usage data of a corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the data communication device; ~~and~~

second message means for transmitting, on an early message date that is earlier than the normal message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices, a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the telephone network by using a call sent by the data communication device;

calculation means for calculating an early message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices based on a holiday data input by the corresponding one of the image forming devices, and based on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices; and

early message date setting means for transmitting the early message date, calculated by the calculation means, to the center management device via the network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the center management device.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): A data communication device for use in an image forming device management system in which a customer system and a center system are connected by a ~~public switched telephone~~ network, the customer system including a plurality of image forming devices connected to the ~~telephone~~ network by the data communication device, the center system including a center management device connected to the ~~telephone~~ network, the data communication device comprising:

first message means for transmitting, on a normal message date for each of the respective image forming devices, a usage data of a corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the center management device; ~~and~~

second message means for transmitting, on an early message date that is earlier than the normal message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices, a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the center management device;

calculation means for calculating an early message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices based on a holiday data input by the corresponding one of the image forming devices, and based on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices; and

early message date setting means for transmitting the early message date, calculated by the calculation means, to the center management device via the network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the center management device.

Claim 17 (Canceled).

Claim 18 (Original): The data communication device according to claim 15 or 16, further comprising message inhibition means for inhibiting the transmission of the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices by the first message means only on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices, which is subsequent to the early message date when the usage data is transmitted to the center management device by the second message means.

Claim 19 (Canceled).

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): A management method for an image forming device management system including a customer system and a center system linked together by a ~~public-switched-telephone~~ network, the customer system including a plurality of image forming devices and a data communication device connected to the image forming devices, the center system including a data management device connected to the data communication device via the ~~telephone~~ network, the management method comprising:

transmitting, on an early message date that is earlier than a normal message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices, a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices from the data communication device to the center management device via the ~~telephone~~ network by using a call sent by the data communication device;

receiving, on the early message date for each of the respective image forming devices, the usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices that is transmitted by



the data communication device, at the center management device, using the call sent by the data communication device;~~and~~

issuing a billing of a usage charge of the corresponding one of the image forming devices, at the center management device, based on the usage data received by the center management device;

calculating an early message date for a corresponding one of the image forming devices based on a holiday data input by the corresponding one of the image forming devices, and based on the normal message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices; and

transmitting the early message date, calculated by the calculating, to the center management device via the network, so that the calculated early message date is set in the center management device.